



State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Administrative Policies and Procedures: 16.46-BA

Subject: Assessment and Placement of Children in Foster Care

Supersedes: DCS 16.46-BA, 09/15/01 **Local Policy: No**
Local Procedures: No
Training Required: No

Approved by:

Effective date: 09/15/01

Revised date: 12/01/03

Application

To All Department Of Children's Services Program Operations Employees

Authority: TCA 37-5-106

Policy

All children shall be placed in accordance to their individual needs. DCS will be respectful of the importance of a child being placed as close to his/her home and community as possible, placing siblings together, assuring that a child be placed in the least restrictive, most home-like setting possible, and being mindful of child, family and community safety.

Procedures

A. Entry into foster care

A child shall be considered to have entered foster care on the date that the child enters the department's physical custody or on the date that the child enters the department's legal custody, whichever is sooner.

B. Assessment of children entering foster care

1. All children entering foster care shall receive an assessment using the department's standardized assessment protocol.
2. The assessment protocol shall include:
 - a) Complete social history,
 - b) Completion of a child safety and risk assessment,

- c) Completion of a community risk assessment (if appropriate),
- d) An assessment of family functioning,
- e) An assessment of the child's clinical well being,
- f) A psychological evaluation if the need is indicated, and
- g) An EPSDT medical screening.

C. Use of temporary facilities

1. Children shall not remain in emergency or other temporary facilities for more than thirty (30) days.
2. Additionally, children shall not be placed in more than one shelter or other emergency or temporary facility within any 12 months period. An exception may occur in the case of children who are runaways, facing a direct threat to their safety or who are a threat to the safety of others and immediate removal from their current placement is necessary. Temporary placements in these exceptions shall not exceed a maximum of five (5) days.
3. An additional exception is for children whose behavior has changed so significantly that placement for the purposes of assessment is critical for the determination of an appropriate placement. In the cases of additional temporary placements for assessment, the Regional Administrator must certify in writing that the assessment is essential for an appropriate placement to be determined. Such placements for assessment purposes shall not exceed fifteen (15) days.

D. Location of placements

1. All children shall be placed within their own regions or within a 75-mile radius of the home through which the child entered custody, unless the child's needs are so exceptional that they cannot be met by a family or facility within the region.
2. A child may also be placed outside the region of commitment or more than 75 miles from the home through which the child entered custody, if the parents relocate outside the region or if the child is to be placed with a relative out of the region.
3. In the case of exceptional needs, relocation of the parents, or relative placement outside the region, the Regional Administrator or Team Coordinator shall document in writing the need for placement outside the region or in excess of 75 miles. Such documentation shall be contained in the child's case file.

E. Relative placements

1. Placement with a relative shall always be preferred over that of a non-relative as long as the relative home can provide a safe and stable home environment.
2. Relatives providing for children in custody of the department shall be provided with the same financial and case management support as non-relative foster homes.

F. Placement of siblings

1. Siblings who enter custody at or near the same time shall be placed together, unless doing so is harmful to one or more of the siblings, one of the siblings has such exceptional needs that can only be met in a specialized program or facility, or the size of the sibling group makes such placement impractical notwithstanding diligent efforts to place the siblings together.
2. If a sibling group is separated at the time of placement, the child's case manager working with recruitment and retention staff shall make immediate efforts to locate or recruit a family in whose home the siblings can be reunited. These efforts shall be documented and maintained in the case file

G. Placement of children under age six

1. No child under the age of six (6) years of age shall be placed in a group care, non-foster family home setting, except for children with exceptional needs which cannot be met in any other type of placement and upon the express written approval by the Regional Administrator.
2. The Regional Administrator shall document that the child's needs can only be met in that specific facility and shall include in his/her documentation a description of the services available in the facility to address the individual child's needs.

H. Use of detention, jails, or correctional facilities

No child in foster care shall be placed by DCS or with knowledge by DCS in a jail, correctional, or detention facility unless a child has been charged with a delinquent offense or unless otherwise placed or ordered by the court.

I. Placement of children determined to present a high risk for perpetrating violence or sexual assault

A child determined by a DCS assessment to be at high risk for perpetrating violence or sexual assault shall not be placed in any foster care placement with other foster children who would be put at risk by placement of the child.

J. Placement decisions to be made in the context of a Child and Family Team Meeting

At any point that it is determined that a child may need to change placements, this final decision must be made within a Child and Family Team Meeting in accordance with DCS policy [31.7, Engaging Families](#). In the case of an emergency change of placement, a Child and Family Team Meeting must be convened in close proximity to the date of placement change (no more than seven (7) days) for the purpose of bringing former and new care givers or agencies together to assist in the transition and meeting the child's needs, as well as to address any permanency planning issues necessary to continue to move the child to permanency.

K. Disclosure of all relevant child information to persons or providers receiving or considering to receive the child into placement

1. In the incident of a child being placed in any setting with a contractor, DCS will provide all information to assure appropriate placement and services.
2. In the event that a child is placed in DCS foster family care, the department will disclose all information in accordance with DCS policy [16.34, Disclosure of Medical, Psychological, and Behavioral Information to Foster Parents](#). This will include the use of form CS-0544, *Foster Home Placement Checklist*. All agencies placing children in foster homes will meet all obligations as outlined in DCS policy [16.34, Disclosure of Medical, Psychological, and Behavioral Information to Foster Parents](#), and will have their own equivalent placement checklist.

Forms/Templates

CS-0544 Foster Home Placement Checklist

Collateral Documents

None

Standards

None

This Is A Brian A Policy And May Not Be Modified Without Prior Authorization